

MAYOR OF LONDON

Leonie Cooper AM

Chair of the London Assembly Environment
Committee

C/o Moonisah.Iqbal@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA160425-4162

Date: 3 July 2025

Dear Leonie,

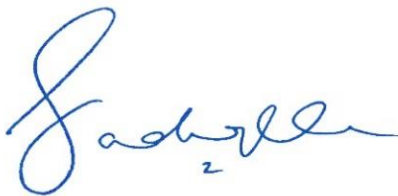
Thank you for recently sending me the London Assembly Environment Committee's report "London: A Growing City?" about funding and support for food growing in London, from your predecessor, Zack Polanski AM, further to his letter received in November 2024. I know that the report is the product of a great deal of work by Environment Committee members, and I thank them for their efforts.

I welcome the report's recommendations – my responses to which can be found in the annex to this letter.

I agree with you that food growing in London provides multiple health, environmental and community benefits for Londoners, and since I last wrote to you on this issue, Greater London Authority (GLA) and third-party funding are supporting Capital Growth until 31 October 2026 at least.

I am certain that officers will continue to work constructively with the Environment Committee, and I look forward to us continuing to improve food for all Londoners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the name.

Sir Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

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Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Environment Committee's report on food growing: "London. A Growing City?"

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should commit ongoing funding to London-wide food growing networks to share learning and good practice across London boroughs and local food growing groups. The Mayor should also ensure that food growing is supported across all departments with clear ownership by one of the Deputy Mayors and is a significant component of other programmes and funding opportunities, such as his new Green Roots fund.

The Mayor recognises the health, environmental, social and wellbeing benefits Londoners and their communities gain from growing food together.

The GLA, alongside the City Bridge Foundation, is funding the Capital Growth network until at least 31 October 2026, which will help to ensure that this programme can continue to strengthen its work with London local authorities and with community-based networks in each borough.

Future support for food growing in London will be considered alongside other work programmes, and the Mayor's Green Roots Fund, which is now open, will welcome applications from food growing projects.

Co-ordination of food policy work continues to be based in the GLA's City Intelligence Unit, in line with that unit's role in offering services and support to teams across the GLA.

Recommendation 2

Ahead of the next budget for 2026-27, the Mayor should set out the steps he intends to take to make London's food system more resilient by end of this Mayoral term. This should include supporting the Right to Grow.

The Mayor welcomes this recommendation in what is a complex area and is already investing in a range of programmes to create a more resilient London food system, particularly to ensure that vulnerable Londoners have enough food to feed themselves and their families.

As noted in previous correspondence with the Committee, the Mayor does not have the powers to improve the resilience of the whole of London's food system. That system, or set of systems, is highly complex, wide-ranging, and delicate, full of myriad interdependencies, with much of it outside the Mayor's ability to influence.

Officers will continue to evaluate what evidence about the wider food system is available and which may be useful in informing GLA work in this area and to develop thinking on areas that the Mayor could prioritise to increase London's and Londoners' resilience to food shocks. This is different from increasing the resilience of the whole food system but has the potential to be more impactful and achievable within the Mayor's powers.

This work will be developed in partnership with the London Resilience Group; GLA policy teams, including the resilience team; the London Food Board and its Boroughs Food Group; and other partners to help build upon work already undertaken in this area.

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In terms of Right to Grow, the Mayor supports increasing opportunities for community growing in London. Capital Growth will continue to work with partners to develop a Right to Grow network and hold related events for interested parties.

New Right to Grow legislation is not the only way to secure more land for community growing. Local authorities should provide and enable a range of community growing spaces, both through long-term allocated spaces and temporary opportunities on sites that may be developed in the future. The Mayor's London Plan supports this through Policy G8 Food Growing, which encourages the provision of space for urban agriculture, including community gardening and food growing within new developments and meanwhile uses on vacant or under-utilised sites.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should work with Boroughs to undertake a London-wide review of food growing sites across the capital and identify opportunities for making new land available for Londoners to grow food, including new allotments, community farms and orchards. The new Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Green Infrastructure Framework (LGIF) should include a map of current and potential land for food growing, as well as a metric to assess the average distance for Londoners to access a public food growing site.

The Mayor notes this recommendation but does not currently have the resources to lead this work. Some of these priorities may be taken forward as part of the work that Capital Growth undertakes with its local authority partners across London and may be the focus of funding bids under the Green Roots Fund. Officers will continue to work with partners to build as comprehensive a picture as possible for Londoners seeking to participate in food growing.

Due to the lack of available maps and data, the LNRS and the LGIF will not be able to include maps related to food growing. If that data were to become available, it could be added to future iterations of the LGIF.

Recommendation 4

As part of the London Plan review, the Mayor should amend the equivalent London Plan Policy G8 on food growing to:

- Require boroughs to undertake a full assessment of the need for new food growing sites including land available for growing by area and develop a strategy to increase access to growing sites, including a focus on using food growing to support those communities with the most to gain from a shift to healthy and sustainable diets.
 - Strengthen protections for existing food growing sites.
 - Require boroughs to set measurable targets to improve access to food growing opportunities – such as a target amount of land per population, and/or additional area for food growing per new development.
- Encourage London boroughs to work with communities to support a right to grow, such as Southwark's Allotment Expansion Guarantee, and make additional land available for community food growing where needed with secure leases.
 - Encourage London boroughs to identify a named existing officer responsible for supporting food growing to liaise between different departments and be a contact point

The Mayor is currently consulting on 'Towards a New London Plan', which sets out some of the key issues and options for possible changes to the next London Plan. As part of this, he is inviting interested parties to submit relevant evidence and views, and this Environment Committee report will be recorded as part of that evidence.

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One of the issues highlighted is open space, including a suggestion that the approach to how open space deficiency is measured be reconsidered. A further option relates to the potential for a new policy for London's rural areas. The Mayor would welcome any further evidence you wish to share on both these areas to help inform the development of the next London Plan.

The development of the next London Plan will be in a context that focuses on how planning applications are determined and work with other policies and regimes, including at the national and local level. The next London Plan will need to account for other protections outside of the planning system, such as those under the Allotment Acts, which it should not duplicate. Lastly, the two final points suggested as part of this recommendation do not fall within the typical remit of planning policy and would be best explored through a conversation with London Councils.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should convene stakeholders across London to agree actions to reduce barriers for “Black, Brown, and minority-led” food growing projects including:

- Supporting leadership training and representation in decision-making.
- Developing grants/funding for underrepresented growers and training providers.
- Convening training providers to review the diversity of staff and students.
- Working with local authorities to increase access to land.

The Mayor acknowledges the important role that food growing can play in strengthening communities and in growing culturally appropriate food, including for Black Londoners, people of colour and other under-represented population groups. The next phases of work being undertaken across the Capital Growth network include a commitment to working more closely with those communities and to providing training and enabling and ensuring opportunities for the full participation of people from those communities in food-growing activities.

In summer 2026, Capital Growth will convene a London-wide food-growing conference, which will include representation of food growers from minority backgrounds.